

REMARKS

The application has been amended to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter that Applicants regard as the invention so as to place the application, as a whole, into a *prima facie* condition for allowance. Great care has been taken to avoid the introduction of new subject matter into the application as a result of the foregoing modifications.

Claims 1-26 are pending in the present application. By way of the foregoing, Claims 25 and 26 are cancelled. Claims 1-24 are allowed.

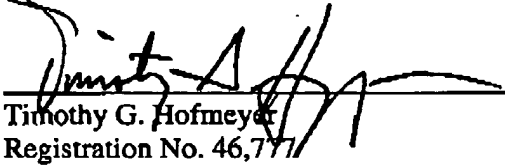
The prior art cited but not relied upon by the Examiner has been reviewed with interest. However, this prior art is not deemed to vitiate the patentability of the claimed invention. Accordingly, the purpose of the claimed invention is not taught or suggested by the cited references, nor is there any suggestion or teaching that would lead one skilled in the relevant art to combine references in a manner that would meet the purpose of the claimed invention. Because the cited references, whether considered alone, or in combination with others, do not teach or suggest the purpose of the claimed invention, Applicants respectfully submit that the claimed invention, as amended, patentably distinguishes over the prior art, including the prior art cited merely of record.

Based on the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1-24 are in condition for allowance at this time, patentably distinguishing over the cited prior art. Accordingly, passage to a Notice of Allowance is respectfully solicited.

The Examiner is respectfully urged to telephone the undersigned attorney at (919) 425-3000 to resolve all remaining issues, if any, relating to this case and the present transmittal.

Respectfully submitted,

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